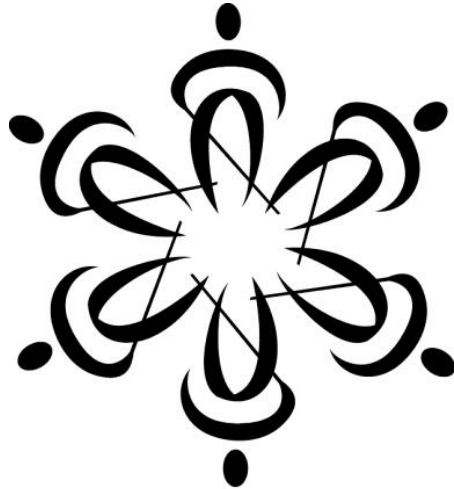


The 49th Annual State Convention
National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey



Live The Life You Want; Becoming Champions

Thursday through Sunday
October 23, 24, 25, & 26, 2025

APA Hotel Woodbridge
120 Wood Avenue South
Iselin, NJ 08830

Linda Melendez, President

908-590-1747

president@nfbnj.org

www.nfbnj.org

Who We Are and What We Do

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), established in 1940, is the oldest and largest organization of and for the blind in the US and its territories. The NFB is made up of blind and low vision people of all ages, and their families and friends. We help blind people adjust to eyesight loss, assist parents and teachers of blind children, and promote the full participation and integration of blind people in our communities. Our activities include:

- Assisting blind persons in acquiring the skills of independence and developing confidence in themselves
- Supporting parents and teachers of blind children with information, mentoring, role modeling, and training
- Preparing blind students for careers and self-sufficiency through mentoring, training, and academic scholarships
- Encouraging blind seniors to continue to live active and meaningful lives
- Advocating policies that eliminate discrimination, promote civil rights, and guarantee equal access to high-quality educational and rehabilitation programs
- Sponsoring information campaigns and legislative action at the state and national levels
- Educating the public through community activities and publications

Spotlight on the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey (NFB of NJ)

Since 1976, the NFB of NJ, an affiliate of the NFB, has been providing invaluable information and resources to blind/low vision people throughout the state. Our members work together for a brighter tomorrow by raising expectations for blind people everywhere so that blind people can live the life they want. Our five chapters meet monthly; committees and groups meet at various times throughout the year. Please join us — we would welcome your participation and membership. For more information on the affiliate, chapters, committees, groups, programs, and projects, visit

www.nfbnj.org

Integrity and Respect

To allow all attendees the chance to benefit from all aspects of the convention, we are committed to providing a harassment-free environment for everyone. We appreciate your assistance in cultivating an atmosphere in which participants from diverse backgrounds can learn, network, and share with each other in an environment of mutual respect. Thank you for doing your part to contribute to our community and the high expectations we strive to maintain. To read the NFB Code of Conduct, visit www.nfb.org/about-us/history-and-governance/code-conduct.

NFB Mission Statement

The NFB advances the lives of its members and all blind people in the United States and its territories. We know that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day, we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between them and their dreams. Our collective power, determination, and diversity achieve the aspirations of all blind people.

NFB Pledge

I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its constitution.

Fragrance-Free Policy

The NFB of NJ's goal is to be sensitive to members with perfume and chemical sensitivities who, as a result, may suffer potentially serious health consequences. In order to address this concern, members and participants at conventions and other meetings should refrain from wearing scented products, including, but not limited to, perfumes, colognes, aftershave lotions, or similar products. We want to ensure full participation in all of our statewide activities.

Accessibility Statement

The NFB of NJ holds itself to the highest standards of inclusion in all our work. This commitment encompasses our in-person events as well as our virtual communications. To make accessibility-related requests or report barriers, don't hesitate to get in touch with Clarke King, 2nd VP, NFB of NJ, at czking30@gmail.com

Announcements

Champion Sponsors

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation President's Grant Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation.

NaviLens

NaviLens is an award-winning accessibility technology developed in Spain, designed to help blind and low-vision people navigate spaces independently. Using high-contrast matrix codes that can be scanned from a distance and without focusing, NaviLens instantly delivers information in audio, text, and up to 40 languages, making environments more inclusive for everyone.

Join us for a focus group hosted on the final morning of the convention, Sunday, 9:30 AM, right after breakfast. This session will be an open conversation with attendees to share their experiences using NaviLens during the event. Your feedback is invaluable in helping to improve the product.

Rogue State Games

Rogue State Games is a store in Mahwah, New Jersey that sells and provides a place to play a variety of games, including miniature games, card games, and board games. We strive to make people feel comfortable, warm, and included. Customers of all kinds are welcome into our community, as we offer a social environment, gaming entertainment, and fun as our business. We have a further commitment to charitable organizations such as the National Federation of the Blind of NJ, combining our people and resources in supporting good and worthy causes.

The Degenshein Family

Question: Why do my husband and I annually donate to the NFBNJ?

Our answer: Beyond fellowship, all NFBNJ members are provided the tools to become more independent and self-sufficient. The biblical parable "teach a man to fish" is central to the organization's mission... albeit using 21st century fishing rods: iPhones, Siri, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Just fabulous what the NFBNJ does for us all. As the Ruffalo/Degenshein motto is NFBNJ=Never Felt Better No Joke!

David I. Mizrahi, Esq.

Licensed in New Jersey and New York since 2023, represent clients in website accessibility matters. Drawing on experience in the field

since 2018, he combines experience and passion to fight for equal access online and serves as a go-to resource for legal guidance.

Orientation Guide: APA Hotel Woodbridge

Overview

This guide helps blind guests navigate the APA Hotel Woodbridge in Iselin, New Jersey. It incorporates all known landmarks and corrections to date, including the lack of an awning or fence at the back entrance and the presence of a general coffee shop rather than a Starbucks. The five key reference points are the back door, registration desk, coffee shop, front desk, and lobby elevators. Use these as anchors for orientation.

Arrival and Back Entrance

- Back door/bus drop-off: When the bus stops at the rear of the hotel, there is no overhead awning. The doorway into the building is straight ahead. On your immediate left, flush with the building wall, is an unfenced dog-relief area roughly 10 × 25 feet with synthetic grass and waste bins.
- Entering the vestibule: Through the glass doors, you enter a small vestibule. This space is the hub for reaching the ballrooms, registration desk, and elevators. There are two ramps.
 - Right ramp: Leads up to the registration desk, where conference badges and information are provided.
 - Left ramp: Leads up to the ballroom foyer (pre-function area) and NaviLens. This is the only interior path to the Metropolitan Ballroom (sections B, C, and D).

Registration Desk and Coffee Shop

- At the top of the right ramp, the registration desk stands against the right-hand wall. Volunteers here can assist with conference credentials and directions.
- Just beyond the registration desk, before you reach the front lobby, is a coffee shop. This replaces the Starbucks label shown on the floor plan.
- Continue past the coffee shop, and you will reach the front lobby and front desk, where hotel room check-in occurs. The main entrance to the front of the hotel is just beyond the front desk.

Lobby Elevators and Second-Floor Meeting Rooms

- From the registration desk, retrace a few steps toward the vestibule and then turn left. You will find the lobby elevators near the coffee shop.
- Use these elevators to reach the second-floor meeting rooms:
 - Room 200: Immediately to the right or straight ahead when exiting the elevator; 18 tables are arranged around the perimeter with two columns in the center.
 - Room 203 (meal room): Left of room 200; contains twelve round tables with buffet tables along the window wall.
 - Additional rooms (201, 202, 206) line the same corridor.

Reaching the Metropolitan Ballroom

To access the Metropolitan Ballroom from anywhere inside the hotel, you must return to the back-door vestibule. Take the left ramp up into the ballroom foyer. NaviLens tables line this foyer and provide tactile guidance. Ballrooms B, C, and D are arranged side by side along this corridor. There are no interior hallways from the front lobby to the ballrooms.

Returning from the Ballrooms

- Exit the ballroom foyer and descend the ramp back to the vestibule. From here you can choose:
 - Right to the registration desk, coffee shop, and front lobby.
 - Left to the lobby elevators and second-floor rooms.

Convention News

Different ways to access the latest and most up-to-date convention news.

- Read emails from convention@nfbnj.org
- Read emails with Convention subject lines from president@nfbnj.org
- Visit our webpage by clicking on the link below [State Convention | National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey](#)
- Follow us on Facebook using the link below <https://m.facebook.com/NFB-NJ-353099574776238>

Quiet Space

Bacall's

Need a break from the busy energy of the convention? Visit our Quiet Space—a calm, supportive environment designed for rest and recharging. Whether you want a few moments of silence, a low-stimulus area to relax, or simply a chance to reset, this space is available to all attendees. Take a breath, refresh your mind, and return ready to fully participate in the convention experience.

Guide Dog Relief Area

Please reference the "Overview Section" in the [Orientation Guide: APA Hotel Woodbridge](#).

Renewing Annual Affiliate Membership

Metropolitan Ballroom

Would you like to renew your affiliate membership to join a committee, group, program, or project? Then come pay your dues and remain a member of the affiliate on Friday, October 24, from 8:00 to 8:25 AM. Annual dues are \$10. You can also renew your membership by clicking on the link below and using PayPal or a credit/debit card online, or write a check to NFB of NJ and mail it to the Affiliate Treasurer at NFB of NJ, PO Box 2202, Vincentown, NJ 08088. Please write "NFB of NJ dues" in the memo section.

<https://www.nfbnj.org/affiliate-membership-renew-member-form>

Exhibit Hall

Room 200

Visit our array of vendors and outreach resources on Friday, October 24, from 8 AM to Noon. Be sure to thank them for participating in our convention.

Affiliate Auction

Metropolitan Ballroom

Our annual auction, which raises funds for the work we do as an affiliate, is set for a single time block on Friday, October 24, beginning at 7:00 PM, following our Federation Family Dinner. Bring your cash, checkbook, or credit card to bid on items of varying values. Everyone, budget-conscious or not, is bound to find a treasure to take home! Donated auction items are welcome, and an Auction Basket form must be filled out by clicking on the link below and dropped off at the Registration Desk when it is open; see the agenda for hours.

<https://nfbnj.org/state-convention/auction-contribution-form>

Affiliate 50/50 Raffle

Support the affiliate by purchasing 50/50 raffle tickets, 1 for \$5, 3 for \$10, and eight for \$20. Watch for opportunities to purchase during the convention or look for Ed Garcia, Chair Raffle Committee.

Door Prizes

Door prizes will be drawn for pre-registered conventioners and announced throughout the technology seminar, general sessions, and banquet. You must be inside the room when your name is called in order to claim your prize. Donated door prizes are welcome and can be dropped off at the Registration Desk when it is open; see the agenda for hours or contact Lizzy Miner at elizabethminor@verizon.net

Host Chapter

We are pleased to announce this year's host chapter is the Northeast Chapter, whose members have aided with our Exhibit Hall and various convention activities. Only a host chapter is permitted to fundraise during the convention. Please support them; they will have a table across from the Registration Desk.

Registration Desk

Please reference the "Overview Section" in the [Orientation Guide: APA Hotel Woodbridge](#).

Pre-Registration Pick-Up and On-Site Registration

Registration Desk

Thursday, October 23 — 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Thursday, October 23 — 6:30 PM to 7:00 PM

Friday, October 24 — 6:00 to 6:30 AM **Pre-Registration pick-up only Room 203**

Friday, October 24 — 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Sat., October 25 — 7:30 AM to 2:00 PM

Pre-Purchased Breakfast Buffet

Room 203

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt with you each morning to receive a wristband for breakfast; the band is only valid for that morning.

Pre-Purchased Lunch

Room 203

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt each day with you to receive your lunch.

Pre-Purchased Federation Family Meal

Room 203

Bring your pre-purchase ticket with you and enjoy a pre-plated meal with our Federation family. You must have a pre-purchased ticket or be an aide, PCA, or SSP accompanying a person with a pre-purchased ticket to be seated. Aides, PCAs, and SSPs would have needed to pre-purchase a meal ticket.

Pre-Purchased Banquet

Metropolitan Ballroom

Bring your pre-purchased ticket with you and enjoy your meal with our Federation family. You must have a pre-purchased ticket or be an aide, PCA, or SSP accompanying a person with a pre-purchased ticket to be seated. Aides, PCAs, and SSPs would have needed to pre-purchase a meal ticket.

Pre-Purchased Saturday Banquet Ticket Exchange

Metropolitan Ballroom

For a smooth seating process, we use a "Banquet Ticket Exchange." Bring your pre-purchased ticket to the exchange ticket table (see the agenda for exchange hours), where you will trade it in for a ticket with a table number. If you would like to sit with friends, gather **all** the tickets and exchange them together (tables of eight, and you must have everyone's ticket when you go to the exchange). Let them know at the exchange table if you are bringing an aide, PCA, or SSP, so seating can be arranged. If you do not exchange your ticket, you will be seated where space is available. Open seating will begin promptly at 7:45 PM; no holding of seats permitted!

Identifying Friday Federation Meal & Banquet Tickets

Family Federation Meal and Banquet tickets will be on white 5 by 8 index cards found in your pre-registration packet. Friday meal tickets will have no hole punch; Saturday meal tickets will have one hole punched in the upper left-hand corner. Braille requested meal tickets will be in the center of the card.

Membership & Friendship Mix & Mingle

Room 203

Registered conventioners and hotel guests are invited to meet and socialize on Thursday, October 24, from 7 PM until 11 PM; a cash bar is available. Hors d'oeuvres 8 PM sponsored by the Degenshein Family.

Portrait Studio

Across From the Registration Desk

Take your picture with our backdrop logo during the convention.

Pictures & Recording

We will be taking pictures throughout the convention and recording convention segments, which will be available on the website.

Streaming

We will be streaming the Thursday, October 24, Resolutions Committee Meeting at 4:00 PM, Thursday, Blind Professionals Group Breakout at 7 PM, Friday, October 25, Afternoon General Session, Saturday, October 26, morning and afternoon General Sessions, and finally the Banquet. Participation details are listed below.

<https://zoom.us/j/6477660103?pwd=MUI1dnZQU1JxMkhUemdCSHZUM21H UT09>

One tap mobile

+16468769923,,6477660103#,,,,*460994# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
 +1 646 876 9923 US (New York)
 +1 646 931 3860 US
 +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
 +1 309 205 3325 US
 +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
 +1 386 347 5053 US
 +1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose)
 +1 564 217 2000 US
 +1 669 444 9171 US
 +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
 +1 719 359 4580 US
 +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 647 766 0103

Passcode: 460994

Thursday, October 23, 2025

10:00 AM to 12:30 PM—Pre-Registration Pick-Up and On-Site Registration

Registration Desk

12:30 PM to 3:30 PM—Technology Seminar

Metropolitan Ballroom

- 12:30 PM Welcoming Remarks & Announcements—Jane Degenshein, Chair Tech Committee
- 12:40 PM—iOS26 Features; Tony Santiago
- 1:00 PM—Security; Tracy Carcione & Andy Smith
- 1:15 PM—The Many Ways to Read: Libby, Hoopla, Bard app, Kindle; Tracy Carcione, Rick Fox & Tony Santiago
- 1:55 PM—Gadgets Galore; Mac Biggers & Tony Santiago
- 2:15 PM— Fit break
- 2:25 PM—Tips, Tricks & Resources Rick Fox & Andy Smith
- 2:55 PM— A I Where We Are and Where We Are Going? Tech team panel
- 3:45 PM Closing Remarks & Announcements—Jane Degenshein, Chair Tech Committee, & Linda Melendez, President NFB of NJ

4:00 PM—Resolutions Committee

Metropolitan Ballroom

Come witness the development of resolutions, which become the policy statements of NFB of NJ. This meeting is open to all; however, only appointed committee members are eligible to vote up or down on resolutions. Membership voting takes place during the general session and the Affiliate Business Meeting.

6:00 PM to 6:30 PM—Pre-Registration Pick-Up Only

Registration Desk

7:00 PM—NFB of NJ Blind Professionals Group

Metropolitan Ballroom

7:00 PM to 11:00 PM—Mix and Mingle

Room 200

Meet new people and see old friends. Hors d'oeuvres 8 PM sponsored by the Degenshein Family. Also have an opportunity

to see Auction Baskets.

Friday, October 24, 2025, Morning

6:30 AM to 8:00 AM—Pre-Purchased Breakfast Buffet

Room 200

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt with you to receive a wristband for breakfast. The band is only valid for one day. Breakfast buffet must have been pre-purchased per person for each day (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday).

8:00 AM to 2 PM—Pre-Registration Pick-Up & On-Site Registration

Registration Desk

8:00 AM to Noon—Exhibit Hall

Room 203

Visit our array of exhibitors to view the many fine products and learn about services and resources available for those with blindness and low vision. Speak to representatives directly and have all your questions answered.

8:00 AM to 8:25 AM—Renew Annual Affiliate Membership

Metropolitan Ballroom

Our annual dues are \$10; place your dues in an envelope with your name and best contact number.

9:00 AM—Know Your Rights Interactive Info Session Led by Melissa Lomax, NFB of NJ Board Member

Metropolitan Ballroom

Laws are powerful, but only when we understand them. Join this interactive workshop to explore key policies that shape access, opportunity, and equity in everyday life for blind individuals. Together, we'll unpack critical legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Fair Housing Act, and other pivotal state and federal protections. This session isn't about legal jargon—it's about real people, real experiences, and real rights, and it is led by a passionate advocate who doesn't claim to know it all.

10:00 AM— From Washington, DC to Trenton; Engaging with Our Elected Officials

Metropolitan Ballroom

John Paré, National Representative & Executive Director of Advocacy & Policy, National Federation of the Blind Jernigan

Institute

This breakout session will review our federal legislative priorities and how to better engage with the New Jersey federal delegation. We will then discuss strategies for engaging with state Assembly members and Senators.

11:00 AM Exhibit Hall

Room 203

Last chance to visit resources and vendors

Noon to 12:20 PM—Pre-Purchased Lunch Pick-Up

Room 200

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt with you to receive Friday lunch, which was pre-purchased; seating is available.

Friday, October 24, 2025 Opening Session

Metropolitan Ballroom

1:15 PM Music from our NFB Album “Rhythm of the Movement”

1:30 PM Welcome and Call to Order

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

1:35 PM—Opening Ceremonies

Jane Degenshein, NFB of NJ Board Member

Pledge of Allegiance

Music

NFB Pledge

Invocation, Rick Fox

In Memoriam

Honoring Veterans

1:50 PM Announcements

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

2:00 PM—National Representative’s Report: John Paré

Live the Life You Want: Becoming Champions

2:45 PM—In It to Win It; Updates & Achievements

Kaylee McGuire, Deputy Commissioner, Aging and Disability Services, NJ Department of Human Services; Dr. Bernice Davis, Executive Director, NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

3:15 PM—Fit Break

Martín García-Ripoll, NaviLens

3:25 PM– What’s New at the TBBC?

Adam Szczepaniak, Director NJ Talking Book and Braille Center

3:40 Messages from Senator Booker & Senator Kim**3:55 PM– Resolutions Session One****4:15 PM– What’s New with Access Link?****4:45 PM–Announcements****4:50 PM–Adjourn****Friday, October 25, 2025 Evening Program****5:15 PM–Federation Family Meal**

Room 203

Bring your pre-purchased meal ticket to enjoy a meal together as we meet new members and reconnect with old friends. Everyone must have a pre-purchased ticket to attend and be served.

7:00 PM–Affiliate Auction & Cash Bar

Metropolitan Ballroom

This is the moment you’ve been waiting for! Bring your cash, checkbook, or credit card to bid on items. With prizes of varying values, everyone, whether on a budget or not, is bound to find a treasure to take home! Donated auction items are welcome and can be dropped off at the Registration Desk during open hours. Please come and support our affiliate!

8:30 PM–Entertainment & Continued Cash Bar

Metropolitan Ballroom

Get ready for laughs, surprises, and some friendly competition at The NFB of NJ Match Game! You won’t want to miss! Participants will go head-to-head with a celebrity panel, trying to fill in the blank with the same word as many of the celebrity judges as possible. It’s fast-paced, funny, and full of unexpected twists! Audience participation is highly encouraged, so don’t be surprised if you’re suddenly called upon to fill in the blank yourself. Think you’ve got what it takes? Here’s a warm-up: Car _____. Would you say wash, seat, dealer, port, or something totally different? There’s only one way to find out—join us Friday night for The Match Show and test your word-matching skills! Also enjoy music entertainment!

Saturday, October 25, 2025, Morning General Session

6:30 AM to 8:00 AM—Pre-Purchased Breakfast Buffet

Room 200

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt with you to receive a wristband for breakfast. The band is only valid for one day.

Breakfast buffet must be pre-purchased per person for each day (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday).

8:00 AM to 1:00 PM Pre-Registration Pick-Up & On-Site Registration

Registration Desk

8:00 AM to 8:25 AM—Banquet Ticket Exchange

Metropolitan Ballroom

8:30 AM—Pre-General Session Music

Metropolitan Ballroom

9:00 AM—General Session

Welcome and Call to Order

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

9:05 AM—Presidential Report

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

9:45 AM—Nominating Committee Report

Annemarie Cooke, Chair, Nominating Committee

9:55 AM—Introduction of NFB of NJ Scholarship Class of 2025

Lia Stone, Director of Youth Programs

10:00 AM—National Association of Blind Students (NABS) Report

James Yesel, NABS Representative

10:20 AM—NFB 2024 & 2025 National Scholarship Finalists

Lia Stone, Facilitator; Panelists Krystle Allen, Lauren Altman & Sergio Arvizu Arguelles

10:45 AM—Fit break

John Paré, National Representative

10:55 AM—Landing in NOLA

Annemarie Cooke, Facilitator; Panelists Elizabeth Miner and David Berman

11:25 AM– Championing AI for You

Panel Discussion; Moderator: Mac Biggers

Artificial Intelligence isn't just for tech experts, for everyone. In this practical panel discussion, Federationists will share how they incorporate AI into their daily lives through apps, smart glasses, and other accessible tools. These individuals are everyday users who have found creative, impactful, and sometimes surprising ways to make AI work for them. From identifying objects and reading printed text to enhancing mobility and fostering independence, this conversation will shine a light on the real-world potential of AI for blind users.

11:50 AM–Announcements

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

12:00 PM–Adjourn

12:00 PM to 12:15 PM–Banquet Ticket Exchange

Saturday, October 25, 2025 Lunch Break-Out Sessions

12:00 PM to 12:20 PM– Pre-Purchased Lunch Pick-Up

Room 200

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt with you to receive your Saturday lunch; seating is available.

12:10 PM to 1:10 PM–NJ Association of Blind Students Gathering

Room 201

Students, join us to learn about NJABS and enjoy free pizza

12:10 PM–Parents of Blind Children—NJ Meet and Talk

Room 206

Carol Castellano, NJ-POBC

Afternoon General Session & Evening Activities

Metropolitan Ballroom

1:15 PM–Afternoon General Session

Welcome, Call to Order, Announcements

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

1:20 PM–Kenneth Jernigan Leadership In-Service Program

Bree Douglas, President, NFB of NJ Northeast Chapter

1:35 PM– Marching Together on Capitol Hill

Clarke King Facilitator; Panelists Isabelle Nutt and Gregory Keene

2:00 PM–Leadership Seminar

Lia Stone, Facilitator; Panelists Beatrice Olivetti and Nimisha Rana

2:30 PM—Fit Break

James Yesel, NABS Representative

2:45 PM—Affiliate Business Meeting

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ

4:45 PM—Announcements and Closing Remarks

Linda Melendez, President, NFB of NJ, and John Paré, National Representative & Executive Director of Advocacy & Policy, National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute

5:00 PM—Adjourn

5:10 PM to 5:25 PM—Final Banquet Ticket Exchange

7:30 PM—Banquet Doors open at 7:15 PM

Metropolitan Ballroom

Bring your pre-purchased banquet exchange ticket with you! Everyone must have a ticket to be served! There will be a cash bar. Food and bar service will not be available during the keynote address.

Maestra of Ceremonies—Jane Degenshein, Board Member, NFB of NJ; Chair, Senior and Technology Committees

Invocation—

Recognition of Sponsorship—

Keynote Address—National Rep John Paré

Presentation of State Scholarship Awards —Lia Stone, Director of Youth Programs, NFB of NJ

Door Prizes

Sunday, October 26, 2025

Metropolitan Ballroom

8:00 AM to 9:30 AM—Pre-Purchased Breakfast Buffet

Bring your convention pre-registration receipt with you to receive a wristband for breakfast. The band is only valid for one day.

Breakfast buffet must be pre-purchased per person for each day (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday).

9:30 AM— NaviLens Focus Group

This session will be an open conversation with attendees to share their experiences using NaviLens during the event. Your feedback is invaluable in helping

Agenda subject to change

Meet our National Representative:

John Paré, Executive Director of Advocacy & Policy, National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute

John Paré serves as the Executive Director of Advocacy & Policy at the National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute. In this leadership role, Mr. Paré is responsible for overseeing several key initiatives that impact the blind community. One of his most notable responsibilities is managing the NFB-NEWSLINE® program, the largest electronic newspaper service in the world, which provides blind and print-disabled individuals with access to newspapers, magazines, and other print materials in accessible formats.

Additionally, he manages the Independence Market, which offers a wide range of adaptive products to help blind individuals achieve greater independence, as well as the Federation's Governmental Affairs office, where he leads efforts to advocate for policy changes that benefit blind Americans.

Mr. Paré's expertise in public policy and his advocacy for the rights of blind individuals have led to significant legislative successes. He has testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Legislative Branch Subcommittee on Library Services for blind Americans, highlighting the need for accessible resources and services. He played an instrumental role in the negotiations and successful passage of the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, a crucial piece of legislation that improves safety features for pedestrians who are blind or visually impaired, and the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act, which expands access to printed books and other published works for people with print disabilities.

In addition to his work in policy advocacy, Mr. Paré has appeared on major media outlets such as CNN, Fox News, BBC, and various radio programs to discuss issues affecting blind Americans. His efforts to raise awareness and advocate for policy change have helped bring attention to the challenges faced by blind individuals, as well as the solutions needed to ensure greater equality and inclusion.

Mr. Paré holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree from the University of Florida in Gainesville, where he developed a strong foundation in the skills that would later support his influential career in advocating for the blind community.

John Paré's personal journey has been one of resilience, passion, and unwavering advocacy for the blind community. Born blind, Mr. Paré's experiences growing up were marked by the challenges faced by blind individuals in a society that often overlooked their potential. Raised in a family that emphasized the value of education, independence, and community, John learned early on the importance of advocacy and support in overcoming obstacles. His parents, who instilled in him a belief in the power of perseverance, encouraged him to participate in mainstream education and community activities, helping him develop a strong sense of self and purpose.

As a child, John was often one of the few blind students in his school, and he faced many of the misconceptions and challenges that come with being a minority in a typical classroom setting. These formative years shaped his deep understanding of the need for social change and greater acceptance of people with disabilities. He was not content to simply adapt to societal expectations but sought to challenge and change them, advocating for better opportunities for blind individuals, particularly in education and employment. His involvement in advocacy started in his teenage years, participating in local organizations that promoted disability rights and access to resources.

John Paré's involvement with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) has been one of the most defining aspects of his life and career. He first became involved with the NFB as a young adult, seeking out a community of like-minded individuals who shared his passion for advocating for the rights and opportunities of blind people. At the NFB, John found not only a network of support but also a platform for enacting real change in the lives of blind Americans.

Over the years, John has held a variety of leadership roles within the organization, gradually taking on greater responsibility and influence. His commitment to the NFB's mission of promoting equality and independence for blind people was evident from the start, and it quickly became clear that John's leadership skills and personal dedication would be vital to the success of the Federation's advocacy efforts. He became deeply involved in the NFB's grassroots efforts, engaging with local chapters and national programs to build a unified voice for the blind community.

As a leader within the NFB, John contributed to the development and expansion of several key initiatives that are still critical to the

blind community today, including the NFB-NEWSLINE® program. His work helped to enhance this groundbreaking service, which continues to serve as a lifeline for blind individuals by providing access to newspapers, magazines, and other reading materials in a format that is fully accessible. Additionally, John's leadership was instrumental in the creation and expansion of other programs aimed at promoting independence, such as the Independence Market, which provides tools and resources to help blind individuals live more autonomous lives.

John's commitment to policy change has also been a central aspect of his work with the NFB. He played a crucial role in advancing the Federation's advocacy initiatives, particularly in pushing for legislation that improves accessibility, safety, and opportunities for blind individuals. He was an active participant in the efforts that led to the passage of landmark legislation like the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act and the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act. His efforts in government relations, including testifying before Congressional committees, have helped the NFB gain a prominent voice in national conversations about disability rights and policy.

Throughout his involvement with the NFB, John has been a staunch advocate for the power of collective action. He believes that the strength of the Federation lies in its members and their ability to work together toward common goals. His vision of an inclusive society, in which blind individuals are given the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, has shaped his leadership style and his work in advocacy.

The NFB has provided John Paré with the tools, mentorship, and resources to make lasting contributions to the blind community, and in turn, John has become one of the Federation's most influential and respected leaders. His ongoing work within the NFB continues to inspire new generations of blind individuals to become involved in advocacy and to pursue their dreams without limits.

National Scholarship Program—Call for Applications Begins December 1

Every year, the National Federation of the Blind awards more than \$250,000 to blind scholars across fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, in recognition of their academic achievements and professional aspirations. Each scholarship is awarded on the basis of academic excellence, community service, and leadership. For information on eligibility, requirements, application, checklist, and FAQs, please visit:

<https://www.nfb.org/programs-services/scholarships-and-awards/scholarship-program>

Let others know about this program that invests in the future of blind people.

Pre-Authorized Contribution Plan (PAC Plan)

The PAC Plan helps fund important projects such as the NFB Free White Cane program, and is also used to take care of “rainy day” expenditures that may arise unexpectedly. Contributors designate an amount, which can be as little as five dollars per month, to be automatically deducted from a checking or savings account or charged to a credit card. To arrange for PAC Plan contributions, go to www.nfb.org/pac and fill out the form. The National Center will call you to get payment information. You can also call 877-635-2711 or email pac@nfb.org to enroll.

Exhibitors, Resources, and Sponsors

The NFBNJ thanks all our exhibitors and sponsors for your continued support. You help us raise expectations so that we can live the life we want. Please visit our website and view the list of this year’s exhibitors and sponsors.

<https://www.nfbnj.org/state-convention/exhibitors-and-sponsors>.

The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey expresses its appreciation to all members and non-members who attended our
49th Annual State Convention

Thank you for coming

Linda Melendez, President
National Federation of the Blind of
New Jersey
908-590-1747

president@nfbnj.org

For the list of affiliate board members, chapters, committees, groups, and programs, please visit www.nfbnj.org.

We are grateful to all those who contributed time, effort, and ideas to the 49th Annual State Convention of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey, Becoming Champions!